



For the Patient: Imatinib
Other names: STI-571, GLEEVEC®, GLIVEC®,

BC Cancer Agency

- **Imatinib** (i-MAT-in-ib) is a drug that is used to treat blood cancer (eg, leukemia) and other types of cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth.
- **Blood tests** will be taken. The dose of your imatinib may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- It is important to **take** imatinib exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Take imatinib with food and a large glass of water.
- **Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice** for the duration of your treatment, as these may interact with imatinib.
- If you **vomit** after taking imatinib, do not take a second dose. Call your doctor during office hours for advice.
- If you are taking imatinib **once** a day and **miss a dose**, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose; if you are taking imatinib **twice** a day, take it as soon as you can if it is within 6 hours of the missed dose. Otherwise, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times. Let your doctor know about the missed dose.
- **Store** imatinib capsules out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.
- Other drugs such as ketoconazole (NIZORAL®), simvastatin (ZOCOR®), rifampin, and warfarin (COUMADIN®) may **interact** with imatinib. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of imatinib.
- Imatinib may cause **sterility** in men and women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with imatinib.
- Imatinib may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with imatinib. Tell your doctor right

away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.

- ***Tell*** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with imatinib before you receive any treatment from them.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Nausea and vomiting may sometimes occur.	You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Control Nausea</i>.
Diarrhea may occur.	To help diarrhea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Coping with Diarrhea</i>
Skin rashes may occur.	To help itching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can use calamine lotion • If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours • Otherwise make sure to mention it at you next visit
Your skin may sunburn easily.	To help prevent sunburn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid direct sunlight. • Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days. • Apply a sun block lotion with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15.
Headache may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try taking acetaminophen (eg, TYLENOL®) at the usual recommended dose to stop or decrease your headache. If more than the occasional use is needed, check with your doctor.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Swelling around your eyes, in your feet or lower legs may occur if your body retains extra fluid.	Contact your doctor if you experience a rapid unexplained weight gain. If swelling in your feet or lower legs is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your feet when sitting. • Avoid tight clothing.
Tiredness and lack of energy may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in <i>Your bank of energy savings: How people with cancer can handle fatigue</i>. Tell your doctor if this continues to bother you.

STOP TAKING IMATINIB AND SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer); chills; cough; pain or burning when you pass urine.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin.
- Signs of serious **fluid retention** such as an **unexpected rapid weight gain**.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a dose including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling or breathing problems.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, swelling of feet or lower legs.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Easy bruising or bleeding.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Muscle cramps or pain or joint aches.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR